

NIO/SP

DATE: 23 December 1975

TO:

FROM:

SUBJECT: OSR Post-Mortem on NIE 11-3/8-75

Major Criticisms

Procedural:

- More planning is needed prior to kick-off.
- There were major handicaps in the preparation of the NIE--(1) initial imposition of a short deadline by the prospect of a SALT II agreement in late fall; (2) the presence of the NIO/SP in Geneva; and (3) the incompleteness of basic interagency memoranda prior to preparation of the NIE.

Organizational:

- Too much redundancy, a lack of balance, and short shrift to important topics.
- A need for additional annexes.

Substantive:

- "Analytical and evidential underpinnings were weak in several areas."

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DDI-3316-75

19 December 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer
for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT : Postmortem on NIE 11-3/8-75

1. Most of the key people involved in the preparation of NIE 11-3/8-75 met on 16 December to pool their ideas about how the process and content of next year's estimate could be improved. (See attached list of attendees.) This memorandum summarizes the opinions and suggestions of the group. Most of what follows reflects a general consensus, though minority viewpoints are also included.

2. The comments tend to fall within three general categories: procedure, organization of the estimate, and substance.

Procedure

3. There was unanimous agreement that it would be desirable to have the chairman and manager of the estimate designated earlier in the process--assuming that these positions will again be filled by persons outside the NIO/SP staff. This would enable them to participate in the planning process and exercise more effective leadership than was possible this year. Early designation would be particularly important if the NIO/SP continues to be absent for extended periods.

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4. Once the chairman, manager, and working group chairmen were selected, it would be desirable to develop a fairly detailed outline, have it approved by the NIO/SP, and give the USIB reps an early look at it for comments. This might reduce false starts and unnecessary work.

5. There was considerable enthusiasm for a suggestion that the reps, chapter chairmen, NIO representative, chairman, and manager hold a 2- or 3-day kickoff session [redacted]

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[redacted] They would focus on the structure of the document and identify the key issues to be treated. Experts on these key issues would be invited to lead discussions. We felt that such a session would help clarify tasks, integrate the efforts of the various groups involved, and tap the ideas and resources of knowledgeable people fairly early in the game. It would also give a head start in developing a team spirit among the participants.

6. We did not dwell long on two obvious handicaps which we labored under this year. One was the unrealistically short deadline imposed originally when there was a prospect of a SALT TWO agreement in the late fall. The rush to get drafts out and reviewed by the reps did not allow sufficient care and thought, and the drafting in particular was short-changed. [redacted]

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[redacted] The reps frequently found themselves going back over previously reviewed sections following the receipt of a lengthy cable from Geneva altering the draft. There was also frustration over our inability to conduct a dialogue with the NIO/SP. We all understood and accepted the reasons for these situations, but at the same time, we would strongly urge that they not be repeated if at all possible.

7. Another handicap, and one which conceivably could have been avoided, was the fact that the interagency studies which should have provided the basis for our treatment of low altitude air defense and ASW were not completed in time. Also, some of the same people worked on both the studies and the

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estimate, and they were stretched thin at times. More rigorous management of IAMs which impact on 11-3/8 would be desirable to ensure that they mesh with the estimate schedule.

8. One comment which we debated inconclusively was to the effect that the NIO process of doing interagency studies is inefficient and does not properly use the capabilities of line analytical organizations. It would be better, according to this view, if the NIO set out fairly narrow and precise analytical goals and assigned papers to individual agencies. This would force the agencies to put their analysis and conclusions on paper. Differences could then be identified and dealt with to come up with estimate contributions. My own view is that this might be done very selectively (the low altitude air defense study, for example, might have benefitted from this approach) but that the IAM is still a proper mechanism for most key issues.

Organization

9. Everyone agreed that the organization of 11-3/8 could be improved to reduce redundancy, give better balance, remedy the short shrift given to some important topics, and tie the projections more closely to the rest of the document. We came up with the following chapter headings as a tentative proposal:

Chapter I: As is. (There was considerable sentiment for avoiding a major restructuring or rewrite of this chapter just for the sake of being different. Barring major new analysis or information on Soviet military polity, the present manner of treating the subject should be valid next year.)

Chapter II: Present and very-near-term future offensive forces and capabilities. This would encompass what we see deployed or nearing deployment.

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- Chapter III: Similar treatment of defensive forces. There was some opinion that the treatment of strategic defenses, although improved, was still not in proper balance with the offensive treatment.
- Chapter IV: Prospects for future systems. This would treat R&D programs and the longer term qualitative outlook.
- Chapter V: Future forces, offensive and defensive. This would present our force projections, and would be closely tied in with all four preceding chapters. Static measures would also go here.
- Chapter VI: Future force capabilities and their implications. This chapter would present dynamic measures of force effectiveness, interaction analysis, and implications for the strategic environment.

10. We also saw a possible need for additional annexes--or possibly interagency studies--on the following subjects to support the estimate:

- Command and control of strategic forces
- Peripheral strategic forces.
- Intelligence and warning capabilities.
- Research on future strategic weapon concepts that might significantly impact on the strategic balance.
- Strategic passive defense (civil defense, maskirovka, hardening of nonstrategic military facilities, etc.).

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Substance

11. We identified several areas where the analytical and evidential underpinnings of our judgments were weak and probably subject to improvement with further work:

a. ICBM Force Reliability. This factor is significant in our assessments of Soviet counterforce capabilities, but the basis for our figures and the uncertainties surrounding them were not treated as rigorously as some other factors. Paragraph 110 of Volume II was a last-minute add-on and appears superficial.

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c. Silo Hardness. We probably did as well as we could this year on silo hardness, but more analysis may help us do better next time. We were unable to give any assessment of SS-17 silo hardness, for example. Also, we told our readers that we were analyzing new information on SS-11 silo hardness and might revise our estimates. We owe a follow-up here.

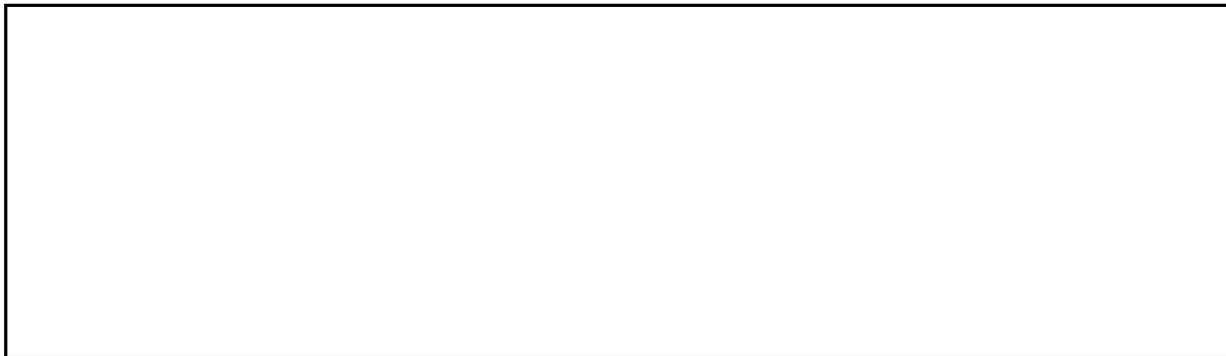
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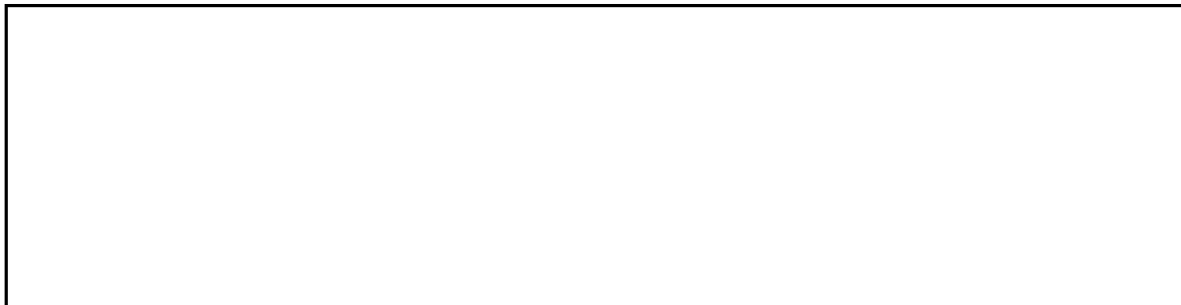
e. Nuclear Warheads on SAMs. We were unable to be at all precise about how many SAM sites have nuclear-tipped SAMs, and our treatment of the effect of such SAMs on low altitude defense capabilities was transparently thin. It should be possible to be more definitive on these subjects next year.

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g. Translating R&D into Operational Systems. The operational problems and degradations involved in turning an R&D prototype into a combat-ready operational system are glossed over in the estimate--although we did make progress in the treatment of ICBM accuracy this year. We should incorporate this factor in other areas, such as air defense and ASW.

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j. Backfire. Our consideration of the touchy Backfire performance issue was made more difficult this year by the fact that the SIC dropped out of the picture around mid-year and no other interagency forum picked it up. We were left with a mixed bag of differing Agency positions in various stages of completion, and our efforts to develop a coherent statement on the problem through the mechanisms of the estimate were less than satisfactory. Our strong recommendation is that the new Weapons and Space Systems Intelligence Committee be tasked with this problem as soon as it becomes a functional body.

k. Launch-on-Warning. There was some opinion that this topic should be looked at more closely and get more treatment in next year's estimate. Others were skeptical of how much we could say but agreed that perhaps we should not dismiss it as lightly as we do now.

General Comments


12. Several other points came up in our discussion:

a. Work on Chapter V and the projections did not start early enough this year. Admittedly, it is difficult to go very far without seeing the rest of the estimate draft first, but it would be helpful to have this section

conceptualized and roughly blocked out for the reps to see earlier in the game. The Air Force representative also lobbied for a better distinction between projections based on an extrapolation of observed trends, and those based on anticipated requirements and either tenuous or no evidence. Others pointed out that the projections did not reflect many possibilities, such as MARVs, that are mentioned in the text. These might be covered in words rather than numbers in the projections.

b. There was wide support for a proposal that the estimate say more about peripheral strategic forces and their relationship to intercontinental forces. As mentioned earlier, this might be a candidate for an interagency study or an annex in next year's estimate.

c. A final, and no doubt vain, suggestion arose: how about a Memorandum for Holders rather than a full estimate next year? Most of us, however, recognized the value to the user of having a comprehensive document under one set of covers.

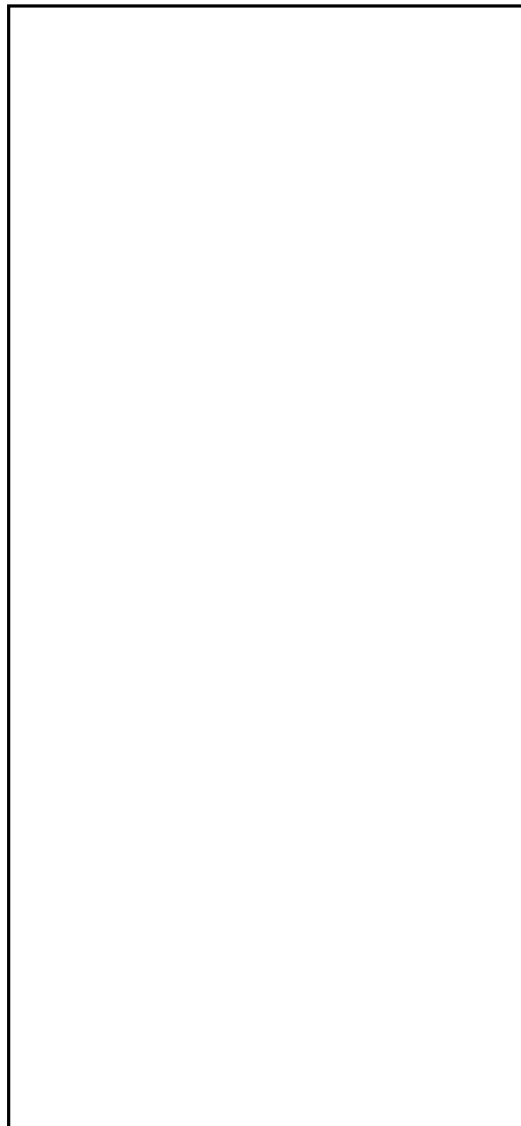

Chairman
NIE 11-3/8-75

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Attachment:
List of Attendees

PARTICIPANTS IN NIE 11-3/8-75 POSTMORTEM

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NIO/SP

CIA

CIA

DIA

DIA

Air Force

State

CIA

Navy

Army

CIA

CIA

CIA

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